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To Whom It May Concern:

It is my pleasure to write to you on behalf of Chuck Rocha and to attest to his character and reputation.

I have known Chuck since 1996. At the time I was a regional coordinator for Labor '96 (a campaign of the AFL-CIO's). The cornerstone of that campaign was rather unique in the labor movement at that time. Rather than relying upon "professional" union staff workers, the affiliated unions were encouraged to release rank-and-file members for that 6 month long effort. Chuck Rocha was one of those local union members who volunteered for the campaign.

Chuck was not in my region, but my colleagues and I heard a lot about him from our counterpart. He was fresh off the tire plant floor in Tyler, TX (making truck tires one day and learning how to run a grassroots campaign the next). Chuck had, and has, the characteristics of someone we all wanted to work with. He's smart, energetic, respectful, hard working and willing to learn. Most importantly, he has a commitment to seeing social justice achieved for everyone. And yes, he has that east Texas, bigger than life personality (always reminding us that Earl Campbell is from Tyler, TX too). I will say, as an Upstate New Yorker, with western Pennsylvania roots, this was a bit different. But that's just who he is.

We first worked together at the end of '96 when his campaign ended up in a run-off. Several of us went to Texas for the final weeks and saw how Chuck operated first hand. He was professional, organized and engaging. Hard to imagine he wasn't a seasoned organizer. Out of the hundreds of union members who were released for the '96 program there were a handful of stars. Chuck was at or near the top of everyone's list. In fact, my boss at the time, the AFL-CIO political director, joked in a staff meeting after getting to know Chuck, "one day we will all be working for him." The following year, Chuck Rocha was asked to be a speaker at the AFL-CIO's National Convention, held that year in Pittsburgh, PA. Chuck was held out as a model of new union organizing and activism.

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It didn't take the United Steelworkers union long to recognize just what they had in their midst. The American steel industry and the union were facing extraordinary challenges in those years. The Steelworkers were looking for innovative ways to communicate effectively with their members and they were looking for new blood that wasn't willing to settle on past successes as a model for the future. As a result Chuck rose quickly with in the ranks. In a matter just a few short years, a twenty something Rocha went from the tire plant floor in Tyler to become National Political Director at the union headquarters.

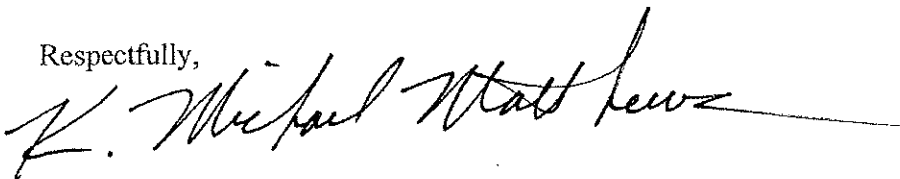
But the characteristics – smart, energetic, respectful, hardworking, willing to learn – never wavered. Over the years, Chuck and I have worked around each other, and in some cases together in labor and progressive politics. And he's never stopped learning and listening. He has expanded his focus beyond the union and has worked hard in the Hispanic community and in other areas. He has gained the respect of many political professionals as well as that of numerous members of Congress.

Chuck Rocha has done all this while raising his son fulltime as a single parent. I for one can't imagine how he has done it.

This all brings us to today and where life stands for Chuck Rocha. Chuck made a serious and stupid mistake. I can't state it any plainer than that. I know no one, NO ONE, knows this more than Chuck himself. This error in judgment has cost him the job he loved so much and has altered the professional path he was on. But in spending time with Chuck this past year I can see he is endeavoring to be smarter, more energetic, more humble and working harder than ever. And yes, he's still learning.

As that you take this in consideration.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "K. Michael Matthews". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Kenneth Michael Matthews